

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Since its inception in 1962, Clark County Fire District 12 (CCFD12) has not had a plan that addressed how leadership positions are filled in the District. Positions were simply filled as they became vacant. While this was acceptable in 1962, today, with increased population growth, impending large commercial developments, a loss of volunteers, increased demands for service, terrorist activities, and a changing political climate, CCFD12 needed to devise plans for developing department leaders.

The purpose of this paper was to identify leadership qualities and rank these qualities in order of importance. This paper used a historical research method to first define leadership and then to identify leadership qualities. This was followed with an evaluative research survey to rank the order of importance of these qualities.

Various literature writings were reviewed. A survey was then sent to 60 current fire department, political, or business leaders.

The literature review provided a definition of leadership coupled with the need to develop leaders. It then identified 21 leadership qualities. The survey ranked these qualities from most important to least important.

The paper recommended CCFD12 devise a plan to develop leaders, identify current members in the department who wish to become leaders, and create specific pathways for these persons to acquire the identified leadership qualities. The paper asked the following questions:

- 1) What is the definition of leadership?
- 2) What are basic qualities of a leader?
- 3) Of the above qualities, how would a current group of persons in leadership positions rank the importance of these qualities?

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INTRODUCTION

“Leadership is at least as much an art as a science, and the key is the people themselves, their ability to know their strengths and skills and to develop them to the hilt.” (Bennis, 1989, p. 144)

As the pace of today’s society accelerates, the need for leaders increases. There are dwindling resources being applied against growing problems. The taxpayers are saying “no” to government’s request for more money without seeing the direct benefit to themselves. The competition for resources is increasing. Energy and fuel costs are at all time highs. Fire departments are rapidly becoming a part of the global economy. While citizens are receiving “pink slips”, fire unions are driving up labor and benefit costs. Privatization of the fire service becomes more of a possibility every day. With terrorism, biological attacks, hazardous materials, occupational diseases, and faster burning buildings, firefighters’ jobs become more dangerous every time the alarm sounds. New litigation tactics, increased diversification of the work force, rapidly changing demographics of neighborhoods, and unstable political climates present new opportunities and challenges to fire department management.

Who will lead the fire department into this new century? Who will replace the leaders from the previous century? Many fire departments have not answered these questions. They often face problems as they occur. They fill leadership positions as they become vacant.

The problem appears to be that there is no plan to identify leaders; no plan to train leaders; no plan to provide for the succession of leaders.

The purpose of this paper is to identify the basic qualities of a leader. The paper will then survey current persons in leadership positions to see how they rank the importance of different leadership qualities. This paper will not produce an actual succession plan but will provide a ranking of the qualities on which a succession plan would focus.

This study uses historic and evaluative research methods. It attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the definition of leadership?
- 2) What are basic qualities of a leader?
- 3) Of the above qualities, how would a current group of persons in leadership positions rank the importance of these qualities?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

“The long-term success of an organization is directly related to the ongoing investment made in those who will lead it in the future.” (Compton, 2000, p 19) “For an organization to sustain long-term growth and development, leadership must be sought out at all levels.” (Brame, 2000, p. 58)

Clark County Fire District 12 (CCFD12) was formed in 1962. (Bartel, 1998) In its first year of existence the District responded to 30 fire alarms. (Bartel, 2000) On scene leadership was established by years of service and the order of arrival of the responders. Often, when 10 firefighters arrived, there were 10 leaders.

Back at the fire station, leadership was determined by secret ballot. Every January the general department membership elected new officers, from the chief on down. (Clark County Fire District 12 Bylaws, 1964) Leadership at the political level was also a popularity contest with the commissioners of the District being elected because they personally knew the most residents in the District.

This system worked. The alarm response was small. Many members of the department joined for the social aspect. The population was rural and accustomed to taking care of most of their emergencies by themselves.

In the approximate 40 years that have passed since its inception, CCFD12 has experienced many changes. (Bartel, 1998) Cattle herds and prune orchards no longer adorn the countryside. Now, the once rural area is covered by large homes on 2 ½ acre lots. The self sufficient farmers are replaced by persons who work in neighboring, large cities and expect the fire department to respond to any emergency they experience. Within the cities served by the District two-story factories, some with floor spaces covering over five acres, produce product 24 hours a day. Restaurants and card rooms provide a continuous flow of citizens into the District. Subdivisions and apartment complexes are located throughout the city limits.

The population CCFD12 serves has increased to over 12,000. (Clark County Fire District 12 Commissioner Minutes, 2001) Added to this are thousands of motorists and commercial traffic who pack the six-lane, west-coast interstate that stretches from Canada to Mexico.

The firefighters in the District have changed. (Bartel, 2000) The volunteer staffing of 1962 disappeared. Now staffing consists of paid firefighters, part-time firefighters, shift volunteers, and intern volunteers. While in 1962 all members were white males who lived and worked in the District, today half of CCFD12's members drive from neighboring large cities and 14% are female. At the inception of District 12 all firefighters were there as a community service. Today most firefighters see CCFD12 as a way of earning a living or as a way of gaining experience so they can become a paid firefighter in another department.

Emergency responses have increased significantly both in quantity and type. CCFD12 now responds to over 1,200 alarms each year. (Clark County Fire District 12 Commissioner Minutes, 2001) Whereas, in 1962, the District only responded to fires, today responses range from fires to wrecks; medical responses to boat rescues; hazardous materials incidents to public assists.

The future presents accelerating challenges for CCFD12. Current proposed development along the major interstate will bring commercial four story office buildings, “big box” retail, more commercial manufacturing, high density housing, and recreational facilities. (Ridgefield City Council Minutes, 2000) An additional 1,000 housing units are currently under development.

The pool of available firefighters for the District continues to shrink as the large fire departments hire increasingly large numbers of firefighters to fill their retirement slots. (Clark County Fire District 12 Commissioner Minutes, 2001)

Fire district financing in the State of Washington is facing a significant impact from a public supported initiative that will be on the November 2001 ballot. Under this initiative, the loss of yearly increases in tax revenue that have followed increases in property values may almost immediately cause many fire districts to face money shortages that could result in firefighter layoffs or reductions in capital investments.

Finally, terrorism is now a reality. This reality will bring increased training, possible new equipment needs, and potential changes in operations.

Through these last 40 years CCFD12 has made many key decisions, hired managers, increased paid staffing, built stations, merged with neighboring cities and districts, and laid plans for the future. The District hired a Division Training Chief to implement quality EMS and fire responses and to lay out career paths for all District members. CCFD12 has sent its officers to technical schools, management schools, the National Fire Academy, and various seminars.

One thing CCFD12 has ignored since its beginning is how to truly identify good leaders and provide training to persons to improve their leadership skills. This has been left to chance.

This situation related directly to Unit 2, Developing Self as a Leader, and Unit 6, Succession/Replacement Planning, in the Fire Officer Program’s (EFPO) Executive Leadership.

With expanding service levels and population increases facing CCFD12 coupled with financial constraints, political uncertainties, and a changing work force, it is imperative the District develop a means of providing good leaders to both fill new positions and increase effectiveness of current members in leadership positions. This paper will deal specifically with defining leadership and identifying the most significant leadership qualities using both literature review and a survey. The Training Division will then be able to implement a training plan that keys on the most critical elements of leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kouzes and Posner (1993) stated that one of a leader's main functions is to keep hope alive. Other important qualities he added to his description of a leader is that they, "are honest, forward-looking, inspiring, competent, fair-minded, supportive, broad-minded, intelligent, straightforward, courageous, dependable, cooperative, imaginative, caring, mature, ambitious, loyal, self-controlled, independent." (p, 14)

Sayles (1993) saw leaders as highly creative individuals who were able to ingest large quantities of information and suggestions while probing inter-related technical, political, personal, and economic data to arrive at solutions that satisfied the needs of both the company and the individual. He further believed that, "leaders create work settings that are oriented toward change and problem solving." (p. 129) Borden (1983) agreed that leaders have the ability to both receive and transmit large amounts of information in an organization.

"Leaders must create for their institutions clear-cut and measurable goals." (Bennis, 1989, p. 18) "A leader must be focused on objectives." (Borden, 1983, p. 41) "Leaders must be in touch. They must know the issues, the customers, and their constituents." (Kouzes and Posner, 1993, p. 180) Good leaders need to know where they have been, what they have

available, and where their organization needs to go in the future. They have a vision and a plan to take them to that vision.

Leaders need certain characteristics. Estepp (1990) believed leaders should maintain a high level of dignity. He also felt they should be very visible and easy to approach. Roberts (1987) liked leaders who were willing to work hard. He thought these types of leaders set the tone for the organization. Leaders should continually strive for improvement. “The object is to try to do everything a little better tomorrow than it was done today. Continuous improvement is the path to a higher standard of leadership.” (Nair, 1994, p. 28)

“A sad fact is that systematic training of leaders is lacking in most organizations. Leadership training is not a luxury but as necessity.” (Matteo, 1993, p. 39) Brame (2000) felt that an organization must seek out leadership at all levels if it was to continue to develop and sustain long-term growth. “Any growth in an organization must come from the premise that you grow an organization one person at a time. (p. 58) Leadership is an ability that few are born with.” (Borden, 1983, p. 34) “It is my central belief that management skills can be learned and always be improved.” (Estepp, 1990, p.12)

Matteo (1993) proposed that you must first identify the needs of your staff before you can develop a training program for leaders. He believed you can put a program together by using existing books, training groups, and colleges. Buckman (2001) added that, “to enhance the development of leaders, we need to help them find, create, and shape a wide range of learning experiences, each of which provides assessment, challenge, and support.” (p. 82) He believed a variety of different experiences is the most powerful tool available to develop needed leadership skills.

In addition to experience Buckman (2001) proposed that leaders need challenges. “In a comfortable assignment, they use their familiar strengths well in serving the needs of the

organization, and they do not learn very much from the assignment. People feel challenged when they encounter situations that demand skills and abilities beyond their current capabilities, when the situation is very confusing or ambiguous, or when the person in question is confronted with a situation he would rather not deal with.” (p. 82) Buckingham thought that, “Chiefs learn from challenging jobs, from significant people, from hardships, from training and course work, and from a miscellaneous variety of other events.” (p. 84)

Finally, Scott (1996) added, “Some of the most meaningful exchanges and learning experiences take place outside the classroom, when participants continue the discussions informally.” (p. 94) He believed that interaction, both social and professional, with other executives increased the skills of a leader.

All these authors’ opinions and findings pointed in the same direction. They indicated that there is a set of values and qualities that are common to leaders. These qualities and values are not necessarily innately born with a person. They are talents that can be taught from books, learned from mentors, acquired from experience, or gained in several other ways. To acquire the qualities, one must first identify them.

PROCEDURES

Definition of Terms

Clark County Fire District 12 Commissioner Minutes. The public record kept by CCFD 12 at their monthly public meetings.

Clark County Fire District 12 By-Laws. The operating procedures established by the District 12 Commissioners

Ridgefield City Council Minutes. The public record kept by the Ridgefield City Council at their monthly meetings.

Research Methodology

Several different resources were used to prepare for this research project. Information, facts, and opinions were gathered from magazines, books, and EFO papers from the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy, Emmitsburg, Maryland, the Ridgefield branch of the Fort Vancouver Regional Library, Vancouver, Washington, CCFD12's resource library, Ridgefield, Washington, and the inter library loan program.

The Survey (Appendix A) was E-mailed or hand delivered to 60 persons. The survey was sent to persons who were currently in leadership positions. It focused on fire department leaders, political leaders, and company leaders.

Forty fire department leaders received the survey. They were all persons in management positions. Thirty survey recipients were current or past participants in the EFPO program. Of these 30, 16 held the position of chief of the department, 11 were division or battalion chiefs, and 3 were administrative captains. The remaining 10 fire department survey recipients held positions in departments in Clark County, Washington. Seven of these were chiefs of their departments and 3 were administrative captains.

Ten survey participants were owners or CEO's of local businesses. The final ten participants were publicly elected officials of the City of Ridgefield, the City of La Center, the Port of Ridgefield, or the Commissioners of Clark County.

The survey was organized using the qualities identified by question number two. The respondents were asked to identify the ten qualities they believed were the most important for a leader.

The main limiting factor on this survey was the number of persons who returned the survey. Of the 60 surveys mailed out, 29 were returned. The largest number of non-returned surveys were from EFOP students. This may be partially due to inaccurate E-mail addresses.

A second limiting factor may have been the terms used to describe the qualities. Without a definition of each term some survey participants may not have understood the quality. A third limiting factor was that not all participants selected ten qualities.

RESULTS

What is the definition of Leadership?

“Leadership, too, is intangible. It is a performing art. It is an encounter. Leadership is something we experience in an interaction with another human being. (p. 1) Leadership is a set of skills and practices that can be learned regardless of whether or not one is in a formal management position.” (Kouzes and Posner, 1993, p. 156) “Leadership in business is the fusion of work and human relations.” (Loden, 1985, p. 278) Sayles (1993) concurred when he pointed out that leaders got involved in both people work and work-work. He said, “Good leadership is synonymous with being able to cope with the problems of the human condition. Everything gets involved, from family and health problems to matters of discipline and economic theory.” (p. 6)

Brame (1999) stated that leadership is selecting important problems and mobilizing people and resources to overcome these problems. Borden’s (1983) statement that leadership is simply the art of accomplishing goals through others gave support to Brame’s statement. Cox (1990) raised these thoughts to the team level with his statement that, “The team-not the leader-is the star.” (p. 336)

Kouzes and Posner (1993) added another definition that, “Leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow.” (p. 1) Nair (1994) seemed to agree when he speculated that power is not yours to take but is given to you by others.

What are basic qualities of a leader?

Conflict

“A king with chieftains who always agree with him reaps the council of mediocrity. (p. 90) Do not expect everyone to agree with you. Do not try to conform everyone’s behavior.” (Roberts, 1987, 57) Kouzes and Posner (1993) felt that leaders should welcome conflict from within their organizations. They should constantly seek different and diverse points of view from the people with whom they work. They should welcome feedback from their constituents. When leaders encourage different viewpoints and dissenting opinions, it forces a clarification of previous ideas and assumptions.

Rosenbach and Taylor (1998) proposed that true leaders should never shun conflict. They should rather use it to their advantage. They should confront conflict and then take responsibility for the decisions and different choices that leaders hammer from conflict. Leaders should assume there are many imperfections in the world. (Zalenik, 1989) They must accept that progress will only move forward through conflict. The world is not composed of perfect harmony and balance. “Always remember that worthy causes meet with the most resistance.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 89)

Courage

“(Ghandi) reminded the world that the human spirit is indomitable and that courage and love are more powerful than force. (p. 2) Each step on the path to a higher standard of leadership takes courage.” (Nair, 1994, p. 49)

Smith (1994) stipulated that no matter where or how it is exercised, courage alone is the main quality of a good leader. While not quite as emphatic, Cox (1990) also saw courage as an important quality of a leader. He stated that, “Leaders who win our lasting admiration and work

to ensure our futures, are the courageous ones poised to blow the bugle out in front of some needed initiative.” (p. 335)

Credibility

“Chieftains must be credible. Their works and actions must be believable to both friend and foe.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 21) Conger (1998) supported this with his belief that you must establish a high degree of credibility with your colleagues. Kouzes and Posner (1993) agreed that credible people will raise the self esteem of people with whom they work. People feel better about themselves when they work with leaders they both admire and respect. “The credibility of leadership is what determines whether people will want to give a little more of their time, talent, energy, experience, intelligence, creativity, and support.” (p. 32)

Decisive

“Decisive chieftains must learn to be decisive, knowing when to act and when not to act, taking into account all facts bearing on the situation and then responsibly carrying out their leadership role. (p.19) Perhaps the most critical element of decision making is timing.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 69)

Decisions are often made with limited information. A true leader should have the capacity to use available information to make fast paced trade-offs between different options. (Sayles, 1993) Roberts (1987) concurred that there is rarely enough information to make perfect decisions. A good leader chooses the more prudent of logical alternatives.

“Self confidence is critical to decisiveness.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 71) Brame (1999) supported this thought when he wrote that a real leader must have both an understanding of themselves and a true sense of direction. They must believe in themselves.

Delegation

Several authors wrote that delegation is important if a leader is to be successful. The most effective organizations are those where the leader empowers their subordinates. (Bennis, 1989) Borden (1983) pointed out that a leader that tries to do all the work by themselves will never complete their work and will end up with severe stress problems.

Once delegated it becomes important that the leader not micro-manage the subordinate. A leader does not second guess decisions of a subordinate once they delegate a task. (Sayles, 1993) Further, they do not require the subordinate to seek their permission before they move forward with a decision. “Wise chieftains grant both authority and responsibility to those they have delegated assignments. Once a chieftain has delegated responsibilities, he should never interfere, lest his subordinates come to believe that the duties are not truly theirs.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 74)

Emotional

“I am convinced that leadership is as much an emotional relationship between leaders and followers as it is a legalistic one.” (Rosenbach and Taylor, 1998, p. 11) It appeared that the magnitude of a successful leader grew in direct proportion to the leader’s emotional commitment to an idea or project. (Zalenik, 1989) Conger (1998) stated that a leader must commit both mentally and from their heart if they are to be successful.

Empathy

“Chieftains must develop empathy—an appreciation for and an understanding of the values of others, a sensitivity for other cultures, beliefs, and traditions.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 48) Kouzes and Posner (1993) believed leaders need to find ways to respond to the interests and needs of their constituents. A boss must understand the work frustrations of their subordinates. (Sayles, 1993) “Leaders must take care of their employees.” (Estepp, 1990, p. 3)

Honesty

“Much of what we are trying to bring to leadership in business, government and our communities fits within the concept of living truthfully.” (Nair, 1994, p. 24) Three qualities Kouzes and Posner (1993) identified as the most important leadership qualities were honesty, inspiration, and competency. “In every survey we conducted, honesty was selected more often than any other leadership characteristic. Honesty is absolutely essential to leadership.” (p. 41)

Humor

“Great chieftains should never take themselves too seriously.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 102)

“Leadership is a serious business, but not one that requires the leader to be without laughter.” (Brame, 1999, p. 48) Kouzes and Posner (1993) concurred that good leaders have a true sense of humor. They are able to laugh at daily troubles and more importantly, they are able to laugh at themselves. Leaders need to have a sense of humor that relates to a sense of proportion. (Brame, 1999) “Leaders must have a sense of humor. Effective leaders use the human side of leadership to gain support and respect for their role by not trying to hide behind a mask of seriousness.” (Estepp, 1990, p. 13)

Cox (1990) felt that true bonding between leaders and subordinates can not really take place without an exchange of humor. Effective leaders use humor in meetings to reduce tensions and allow persons to open up their thought processes. (Loden, 1985) “Humor provides the leader the opportunity to express humanity, vitality, and resilience.” (Brame, 1999, p. 48)

Imagination

Zalenik (1989) believed that imagination is probably the most important quality in successful leadership. Brame (1999) proposed that imaginative thinking allowed the leader to get out of their office and perceive things that are possible.

Integrity

Bennis (1989) described integrity as a moral standard and an intellectual honesty on which all our conduct is based. He believed that anyone who planned on leading must have integrity. He thought integrity was a basis of leadership. Brame (1999) supported this view that effective leaders must exhibit unfaltering integrity.

Knowledge

“Leaders must have a strong sense of self-knowledge before they can begin to understand and lead others.” (Brame, 2000, p. 59) Leaders must possess both brains and breadth. (Brame, 1999) They must possess an understanding of not only their job but understand other organizations and processes that affect their own organizations. Estepp (1990) agreed that, “Leaders of tomorrow have to know not only their immediate environment, but the global environment which has been brought about by the media.” (p. 12) Finally, Compton (2000) pointed to the future when he wrote that no leader can afford to stop learning at any point in their careers.

Listening

“Be approachable; listening to both good and bad news. Otherwise, you will provide reason for murmuring.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 42) Compton (2000) thought listening was a sign of strength by a leader. There is no danger in listening to many different points of view. Just listening does not require that a leader agree.

Listening skills have been identified as a common characteristic of good leaders. (Kouzes and Posner, 1993) He believed that no matter how good we are at listening we should always have an active plan to become a better listener. Compton (2000) expressed the importance of developing excellent communication skills. He agreed with Kouzes and Posner that a leader should never stop learning how to become better at listening. Loden (1985)

summarized with, “Pay close attention to what is being said by others and how it is being stated. Using nonverbal cues to encourage open discussions. Let people finish their thoughts without interrupting.” (p. 13)

Loyalty

“Above all things a Hun must be loyal.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 17) Zalenik (1989) stressed the importance of loyalty. He felt the absence of loyalty between the chief executive and their subordinates was a sign of weakness in leadership.

Negotiations

“In negotiations you must take well studied risks.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 4) Good leaders are also skilled negotiators. (Brame, 1999)

Passion

“The second ingredient of leadership is passion-the underlying passion for the promises of life, combined with a very particular passion for a vocation, a profession, a course of action.” (Bennis, 1990, p. 40) The followers must see that the leader loves what they are doing and live to do it. Followers desire the leader to remain passionate even when they encounter obstacles and setbacks. (Kouzes and Posner, 1993) A leader’s passion gives hope and inspiration to other people. (Bennis, 1990)

Risk

“A chieftain cannot win if he loses his nerve. He should be self-confident and self-reliant and even if he does not win, he will know he has done his best. (p. 102) A good chieftain takes risks by delegating to an inexperienced Hun in order to strengthen his leadership abilities.” (Roberts, 1987, p. 105) Kouzes and Posner (1993) thought that most people would be inspired by a leader who takes the initiative and risks personal safety for the sake of an issue.

Two of the basic ingredients of leadership are curiosity and daring. (Bennis, 1990)

Bennis said that good leaders must be willing to take risks. In an earlier article, Bennis (1989) again discussed the need of a leader to be open and willing to try new ways and ideas; to take risks.

Cox (1990) pointed out that we should not be afraid to take risks. While there is always the chance we might fail, there are equally good chances that we could succeed. In Borden's (1983) opinion leaders should always take the initiative. "Leaders have to provide the risk-taking and entrepreneurial imagination." (Brame, 2000, p. 46)

Storytelling

"The ancient art of storytelling is perhaps the major way that leaders teach." (Kouzes and Posner, 1993, p. 197) By passing on stories about their companies and individuals, leaders teach future workers about the cultures and values of their companies.

Support

"The challenge for leaders is to live up to their fundamental responsibility as human beings: to treat others as themselves." (Nair, 1994, p. 63) Compton (2000) implied the same thing when he said we must help others if we wish the organization to move forward. "Leaders serve their constituents." (Kouzes and Posner, 1993, p. 7)

Trust

"Honor all commitments you make during negotiations lest your enemy fail to trust your work in the future. (p. 84) By their own actions, not their words, do leaders establish the morale, integrity and sense of justice. They cannot say one thing and do another." (Roberts, 1987, p. 62)

Bennis (1989) believed that management trust was the third component of management and was essential to all organizations. Borden (1983) felt that leaders must be respected and trusted. A leader should never make a promise they will not be able to keep. (Compton, 2000) A leader's

word may be their most prized possession. Loden (1985) proposed that leaders build trust through the leader's personal charisma and professional competence.

Trust must flow both ways. When you give a project to a subordinate, you must trust them and not micro-manage their project. (Estepp, 1990) When persons above you confide plans or ideas in you, a true leader will keep these confidences as an inviolable trust. (Cox, 1990) "Leaders who do not command our respect reduce the legitimacy of their leadership and lose our trust." (Nair, 1994, p. 14)

Vision

"Leaders must provide direction to their Huns, never letting them wander aimlessly." (Roberts, 1987, p. 62) Leaders must have a sense of direction and a concern for the organization. (Kouzes and Posner, 1993) True leaders have the ability to see across the horizon of time and see what might be. Brame (1999) thought all leaders must know who they are and where they are going.

"One of the most important lessons you learn at Harvard is that you must fashion your vision throughout your organization." (Scott, 1996, p. 95) A visionary leader will be able to clearly articulate to all affected persons the mission of the organization. (Estepp, 1990)

"If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed. Vision is an understanding of where we are and where we are headed." (Cox, 1990, p. 336)

Of the above qualities, how would a current group of persons in leadership positions rank the importance of these qualities?

Following are the actual results of the survey showing the total number of responders selecting each quality and the percentage of responders that selected that quality.

_3_Accept Conflict____10%__

_24_Knowledge____83%__

_14_Courageous____48%__

_22_Listener____83%__

_26_Credibility_____90%__	_15_Loyal_____52%__
_19_Decisive_____66%__	_7_Negotiator_____24%__
_6_Delegator_____21%__	_9_Passionate_____31%__
_5_Emotional_____17%__	_5_Risk Taker_____17%__
_11_Empathy_____38%__	_2_Storyteller_____7%__
_25_Honesty_____86%__	_16_Supportive_____55%__
_8_Humor_____28%__	_17_Trustworthy_____59%__
_11_Imagination_____38%__	_17_Vision_____59%__
_18_Integrity_____62%__	

When the qualities are arranged with the most often selected quality listed first down to the least selected last, the following list resulted:

_1__Credible	_11_Empathy
_2__Honesty	_11_Imagination
_3__Knowledge	_12_Passionate
_4__Listening	_13_Humor
_5__Decisive	_14_Negotiator
_6__Integrity	_15_Delegator
_7__Trustworthy	_16_Emotional
_7__Vision	_16_Risk Taker
_8__Supportive	_17_Accept Conflict
_9__Loyal	_18_Story Teller
_10_Courageous	

Four qualities, credibility, honesty, knowledge, and listener, were selected by responders at least 75% of the time. Six additional qualities, decisive, integrity, trustworthy, vision, support, and loyal were chosen at least 50% of the time. Only storytelling was selected less than 10% of the time. The most often selected quality was credibility, which was selected by every nine out of ten respondents.

DISCUSSION

The survey identified credibility as the most important quality of a leader. While Conger (1998) agreed that you must have a high level of credibility and Kouzes and Posner (1993) stated that credibility made your colleagues more willing to work for you, none of the authors saw this as the most important leadership quality.

Honesty ranked only slightly less important on the survey with 86% of responders choosing this as a quality of leadership. This coincided with Kouzes' and Posner's (1993) belief that honesty was an essential part of leadership. No other author specifically identified honesty as a leadership quality.

Both credibility and honesty ranked very high on the survey. Different authors also identified these qualities as important. It is interesting to note that a part of credibility derives directly from honesty. Neither of these qualities are things you can acquire from a book. They are instead basic qualities you acquire over a lifetime.

Knowledge came in quite high on the leadership qualities survey with 83% selecting it as a leadership quality. Brame (2000) concurred that leaders must have the knowledge for both their own jobs and of other organizations that affect their jobs. Estep (1990) also felt that leaders must be aware of areas outside their immediate jobs.

It would seem that knowledge is a critical part of good leadership. Without knowledge of a job, the people working there, the environment, and the politics surrounding everyday

decisions a leader would soon lose their credibility. Knowledge should be the one quality that any leader could learn from educational experiences.

Listening skills, ranked in the top 80% of the survey, came in fourth. Compton (2000) saw good listening skills as signs of strength in a leader. Kouzes and Posner (1993) saw them as common characteristics of leaders.

It is imperative a leader have good listening skills. A leader's world is full of constant communication. If a leader does not have the skill to truly hear what is being said, other leadership qualities will suffer.

The fifth quality, chosen by 66% of responders, was the ability to make a decision. Both Sayles (1993) and Brame (1999) agreed that leaders need to be able to make decisions, often with only limited information.

The ability to make decisions must be a quality of a leader. Almost by definition leaders are the ones who take limited information and chose a course of action. The followers are the ones who wait for all the information before risking a decision. Once all the facts and consequences are known, anyone can make a decision.

Integrity and trustworthy were the next most often chosen qualities. Bennis (1989) thought integrity was one of the most important qualities of a leader. Brame (1999) felt leaders must have unfaltering integrity.

Compton (2000) proposed that trust is one of a leader's most important qualities. Borden (1983) said that for followers to trust their leader, the leader must always follow through on what they say they will do.

It is appropriate that integrity and trust be included in the top qualities. It is more relevant that these two qualities, like honesty, are a part of a leader's credibility. Credibility, the most often selected quality, is really composed of several other qualities on the survey.

Vision ranked as the seventh most important leadership quality, drawing 59% survey support. Kouzes and Posner (1993) saw vision as an important quality that allowed a leader to see what the future held and how their organization fit into that future. Brame (1999) said the same. Estepp (1990) expanded this definition of vision to include the leader's ability to instill this vision into all persons in the organization.

From the readings one would think that vision could be one of the most important qualities of a leader. It is interesting that neither the survey nor the authors reviewed ranked vision as the most important quality. Vision is mentioned often in articles and other media sources. It has become a buzz word for organizations. They are always mentioning their vision. With all this attention paid to the vision of an organization, it would seem that vision would rank higher on a leadership quality. Maybe the media and current theory have overplayed the importance of a company's vision.

While courage ranked 11th on the survey, Smith (1994) ranked it as the main quality of a leader. Cox (1990) agreed that it was important but did not feel it was the most important quality.

Imagination ranked 13th on the survey, collecting only 38% support. Zalenik (1989) disagreed with this, believing that imagination was the most important quality of a successful leader. It is probable that imagination should rank higher than the survey rated it. Imagination could be considered an ingredient of vision.

Humor was listed the 15th most important leadership quality. Less than one-third of the survey responders selected it as one of the top ten qualities of a leader. While it ranked low on the survey, numerous authors thought it an important quality. Kouzes and Posner (1993) saw that leaders used humor to lighten problems. Brame (1999) saw humor as a way for leaders to emphasize their human side and gain support and respect. Cox (1990) thought humor was

essential to open up thought processes. Loden (1985) thought it allowed the leader to become a member of the group.

It seems strange that humor would be a leadership quality. One must be careful to not define humor as comedy but as the human side of life. It placed behavior that involves errors and embarrassments into a human prospective. Every one makes mistakes and does embarrassing things. A true leader is able to laugh at their personal situations and allow the group the luxury of making mistakes without a loss of face.

At 19th, risk was chosen by less than one out of five persons completing the survey. Cox (1990), Boden (1983), and Brame (2000) saw this as an important leadership quality.

Storytelling was the least chosen leadership quality. It seems this should be a much more important quality. It could be very effective at forming the culture of an organization.

This study has several positive implications for CCFD12. First, by defining leadership, this study allows CCFD12 to focus on a particular phase in the District's development of persons who currently run the District and to make these persons better leaders. Next, the District can develop programs that key on leadership qualities to prepare persons to move into future positions of leadership.

The study speaks to the need to develop leaders. It pointed out that leaders are not necessarily born with the qualities to be leaders but usually develop these qualities over their lifetimes. It encourages CCFD12 to look at their current members and work with individuals who wish to move into leadership positions. The study further implies that the District needs to continue working with current leaders to keep improving their leadership qualities.

By specifically identifying leadership qualities and establishing a ranking of importance, the District's Training Division can establish pathways that lead persons toward higher levels of

leadership. The ranking of qualities allows CCFD12 to create training plans that place greater emphasis on the more important qualities.

Finally, the study identifies different sources CCFD12 can use to accomplish leadership training. There are classes, seminars, and lectures at local universities and community colleges. There are books and magazine articles that focus on these qualities. Prospective leaders can study past, great leaders to examine their styles and qualities. Another source of leadership training could involve a mentoring program. Prospective leaders could be mentored by current leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Compton (2000) said that succession planning is a key element for the long-term success of an organization. An organization must invest in those who will lead it into the future. CCFD 12 needs to establish a written succession plan that identifies the development of leaders to fill the positions from chief down to lieutenant. The District can not rely upon their past practice of waiting for a position to open and then looking for persons to fill the spot.

Very few people are born with leadership skills. (Borden, 1983) Leadership skills can be learned and improved. (Compton, 2000) A key part of CCFD12's succession plan must be a training plan that addresses the qualities of leadership. The District's Training Division has developed check-sheet pathways for firefighters, intern firefighters, driver/operators, and tender drivers. The Division now needs to develop these same pathways for Lieutenant, Captain, Division Chief, and Chief. While these pathways must include the technical skills for each position, they would also include ways to develop the qualities identified in this paper. As most of these qualities are not quantifiable measurements, it would be more difficult to identify when a future leader had successfully completed a pathway. Still, the pathway would expose a future leader to these qualities and give that person the opportunity to study persons possessing these

qualities and to begin developing these qualities. Then, when a position opens, the District could design their assessment process to include evaluations of these qualities.

“Leaders must be good teachers.” (Brame, 2000, p. 13) A very important part of this pathway plan should be the establishment of a mentor plan. Prospective leaders could work under current leaders, observing these qualities in practice. There is a vast difference between reading about leadership qualities and actually observing them in practice.

Kouzes and Posner (1993) stated that leadership skills can be learned by anyone in the organization. Bennis (1989) agreed that the key to leadership is to develop a person’s strengths and skills to the hilt. CCFD12 must look at all persons in their organization. They need to invest time and effort into persons who are interested in developing leadership skill. The District should not fall into the traditional trap of promoting through the ranks just because of time spent in a position.

Before beginning leadership pathways, the District should run another survey. In this survey the District could more thoroughly define each of the qualities on the survey. On the new survey CCFD12 may wish to combine qualities that are very similar. This could help the District focus on the most important qualities.

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APPENDIX A

For my final Executive Fire Officer Program research paper, I am identifying leadership qualities. My research has revealed the following 21 qualities of a leader. I am attempting to identify the most important qualities so we can develop a program that focuses on these qualities for prospective leaders in our department.

Would you please select what you consider the 10 most important qualities of a leader.

Accept Conflict_____	Knowledge_____
Courageous_____	Listener_____
Credibility_____	Loyal_____
Decisive_____	Negotiator_____
Delegator_____	Passionate_____
Emotional_____	Risk Taker_____
Empathy_____	Storyteller_____
Honesty_____	Supportive_____
Humor_____	Trustworthy_____
Imagination_____	Vision_____
Integrity_____	

Please return this survey to Larry Bartel email larry@ccfd12.org
 Fax 1-360-8887-0862